

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Commodity Credit Corporation

ACTION: NOTICE (Announcement No. USDA-NRCS-VA-12-01)

Conservation Innovation Grants Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Announcement for Program Funding

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

SUMMARY: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture, is announcing availability of Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in Virginia. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2012 will be approximately **\$150,000**. Applications are requested from eligible governmental or non-governmental organizations or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration. Individual grants will not exceed \$75,000.

Funds will be awarded through a two-phase statewide competitive grants process that will include (1) a pre-proposal process and (2) a full proposal process. The full proposal process will only be open to applicants whose pre-proposal applications are selected to advance to full proposals. Both phases are described in this announcement, but **only pre-proposals are being solicited at this time**.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions for CIG projects. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. NRCS will request a full proposal package only from those applicants selected in the pre-proposal phase.

DATES: Applications for the pre-proposal phase must be received at the NRCS State Office in Richmond, Virginia, by 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST), on Friday, **March 30, 2012**.

Notification of selected pre-proposal applications will be announced by **April 20, 2012**. Selected applicants will then be required to submit a full proposal package to the NRCS State Office by 4 p.m. EST on **June 1, 2012**.

ADDRESSES: Applications sent via hand-delivery, express mail or overnight courier service must be sent to the following address: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Innovation Grants Program, Virginia State Office, 1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209, Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014. The contact phone number for hand-delivered pre-proposals and applications is (804) 287-1691.

Applications sent via the United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Innovation Grants Program, Virginia State Office, 1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209, Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014.

To submit your application electronically, visit Grants.gov-Apply for Grants and follow the instructions. Note: all applicants who submit electronically are strongly encouraged to ALSO

submit a paper copy through the methods listed above to ensure that any potential problems with the electronic submission system do not negatively impact any applications.

For more information contact:

Wade Biddix
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1675
Fax: (804) 287-1737
Email: Wade.Biddix@va.usda.gov

Patrick Vincent
Farm Bill Specialist
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1642
Fax: (804) 287-1736
Email: patrick.vincent@va.usda.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8] under Section 2509 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP and CIG to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), who is Vice President of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). EQIP is funded and administered by NRCS under the authorities of the CCC.

B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies, while leveraging the Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches into NRCS policy, technical manuals, guides, and references, or to the private sector. CIG does not fund research projects. Projects intended to test hypotheses do not qualify for a CIG grant. CIG is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology. It is a vehicle to stimulate development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a high likelihood of success, and that are a candidate for eventual technology transfer or institutionalization. CIG promotes sharing of skills, knowledge, technologies, and facilities among communities, governments, and other institutions to ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users. CIG funds projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

A two-phase evaluation process will be utilized for applications submitted under this notice. The first phase requires the applicant to submit a pre-proposal. Applications will be evaluated by NRCS staff under the bulleted topics identified by the applicant (see section I.D). Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

NRCS will accept applications for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years, submitted to NRCS from eligible entities including State and local units of government, and non-governmental organizations and individuals.

NRCS will only request a full proposal package from those applicants selected in the pre-proposal process. Complete applications received by applicable deadlines will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel based on the Criteria for Application Evaluation identified in the application instructions in section VI.A.

Full proposal applications, along with recommendations from the NRCS technical review group, will be forwarded to the NRCS State Conservationist of Virginia, who will make the final selections.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must encompass the development, field testing, evaluation, implementation, and monitoring of:

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems; or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches; or
- Environmental soundness with goals of environmental protection and natural resource enhancement.

To be given priority consideration, the project or activity should do all of the following:

- Make use of a proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate and verify environmental (soil, water, air, plants, energy, and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of conservation technology in the field;
- Adapt conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption;
- Introduce conservation systems, approaches, and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector; and
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

D. State Component

For FY 2012, NRCS in Virginia will consider offering CIG in the following resource concern areas: Nutrient Management, Energy Conservation, Soil Health, and Wildlife.

Pre-proposals that demonstrate the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address at least one bulleted topic listed below will be considered. Pre-proposals must identify the most appropriate bulleted topic the innovation/technology is addressing. While NRCS/VA will accept proposals for each bulleted topic below, special interest is placed on receiving proposals that address topics identified as a "Priority Need."

PRIORITY NEED:

Soil Health

- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate and quantify the impacts of hyper-diverse cover crop mixtures (8-12+ species from 3+ functional groups) in particular and high diversity cropping systems in general (including mixed livestock/crop systems) on soil health (chemical, physical and/or biological properties) with special emphasis on yield and fertilizer response in subsequent crops.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate the effects of managed grazing on soil health (physical, chemical, and/or biological properties) and the related effects on nutrient distribution, plant diversity, ground cover and forage growth throughout the year.

Other Topics of Consideration

- Demonstrate innovative approaches to building soil health in traditional Virginia cropping systems (for example: demonstrate innovative seeding methods, termination methods, crop rotations, etc. to allow better integration of high diversity/high biomass cover crops into cropping systems).
- Demonstrate the effects of grazing management of cover crop mixes on soil chemical, physical and biological properties and water quality.

- Demonstrate the conservation benefits (pollinator and beneficial habitat, water quality, etc) and the economics of bio-intensive integrated pest management systems, including organic pest management systems, in specialty or agronomic crops
- Demonstrate and evaluate opportunities for increasing the intensity of forage-based rotations in order to increase overall nutrient uptake, forage production, and soil quality while reducing reliance on traditional crops subject to drought such as corn (for example, by integrating fall seeded spring oats into dairy crop rotations)
- Demonstrate and quantify the effectiveness of methods to capture dissolved phosphorus from field runoff and subsurface drainage.
- Demonstrate the applicability and utility of in-season nitrogen management tools for determining additional nutrient needs for a range of soils, climates and/or cropping systems.
- Demonstrate effective whole farm strategies for reducing nutrient/sediment losses from dairies, for example by increasing perennials in rotation.
- Quantify and demonstrate nutrient distribution from historical winter feeding sites in pasture based livestock systems, evaluate the impacts of the existing nutrient management system, and demonstrate cost effective management techniques to efficiently distribute manure nutrients throughout the winter feeding season to other areas of the system where the nutrients would improve overall pasture productivity.
- Evaluate and demonstrate energy savings through adaptive management grazing systems and techniques that reduce the need for making and feeding hay, while also using manures and legumes rather than synthetic fertilizers. Deliverables should include energy lifecycle comparison of grazing and haying systems.
- Evaluate and demonstrate energy savings through adaptive management cropping systems and crop rotations that include legumes and grasses in long term no-till systems that will increase nutrient cycling through enhanced soil biological activity and reduce the need for synthetic N fertilizer applications.
- Demonstrate the feasibility and document the relevant issues associated with using low-head hydropower turbines in surface water sources such as in-stream installations and small dams (e.g. using a flow-through or pumpback configuration).
- Develop planning and decision aids to assess and maximize wildlife habitat value on land used to grow biofuel crops.
- Demonstrate new techniques and/or technologies for monitoring and evaluating wildlife habitat both on site and via remote sensing.
- Demonstrate the effectiveness and document the economics of alternate pest control methods in agricultural crops to protect pollinators and their habitats (e.g., high-level or bio-intensive integrated pest management systems, organic integrated pest management system and practices, ground application versus aerial application of pesticides, provision of habitat for “beneficial” insects including natural enemies of pests as well as pollinators).
- Estimate and document the effects upon pollinator populations and health due to the conversion to biofuel feedstock or agricultural production of lands presently enrolled in CRP or other suitable conservation easement programs.
- Evaluate the following NRCS conservation practice standards using a large diversity of flowering plants in order to quantify and demonstrate the revised practice standard benefits to pollinators and natural enemies of pests: 332-Contour Buffer Strips, 342-Critical Area Planting, 393-Filter Strip, 390 Riparian Herbaceous Buffer, 391-Riparian

Forest Buffer, 380-Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment, and/or 580-Streambank and Shoreline Protection.

- Evaluate the impacts on pollinators of various cover crop mixes.
- Demonstrate and document the relevant issues associated with innovative on-farm energy practices and/or technology, including energy conservation, solar, wind and bioenergy.
- Demonstrate and document the relevant issues associated with use of conservation tillage such as no-till and strip-till, cover crops, roller-crimper and/or other cover crop cessation technology and techniques, alone or combined, on specialty crop farms.
- Monitoring to demonstrate the outcomes of establishment of a Longleaf Pine forest. How does establishing a Longleaf Pine forest benefit wildlife, T&E Species, water quality, etc?
- Knowledge and understanding of the economic value of a Longleaf Pine and/or Shortleaf Pine plantings. What are the economic benefits of establishing a Longleaf Pine/Shortleaf Pine planting over a Loblolly planting including pine straw production and how that may influence participation in establishment.
- Provide technical education on the establishment and management of Longleaf Pine ecosystems in order to have a successful planting focusing on when and how to restore the understory vegetation component.
- Understory forest management with fire/herbicide use to promote rejuvenation and forest stand health as well as related wildlife benefits.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

A. State Component

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2012 will be approximately **\$150,000**.

CIG will fund single and multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years (anticipated project start date of **September 1, 2012**). Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. The maximum award amount for any project will not exceed **\$75,000**.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

CIG applicants must be a State or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, or an individual.

A. Matching Funds

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of their total project cost. CIG recipients must match the USDA funds awarded on dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions. Of the applicant's required match (50%), a minimum of 25 percent of the total project cost must come from cash sources; the remaining 25 percent may come from in-kind contributions.

For Beginning Farmers or Ranchers and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers up to three-fourths of the applicant's required matching funds (up to 37.5 percent of the total project cost) may derive from in-kind contributions. This exception is intended to help Beginning Farmers or Ranchers and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers to meet the statutory requirements for receiving a CIG.

In-kind costs of equipment or project personnel cannot exceed 50 percent of the applicant's match (except in the case of projects carried out by either a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities). The remainder of the match must be provided in cash.

Matching funds must be secured at time of application for full proposals. Applications should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Additional information about matching funds can be found at the following link: 2 CFR 215.

B. Beginning or Limited Farmers or Ranchers

Below are definitions of Beginning Farmer or Rancher and Limited Resource Producer. These definitions can also be found at 7 C.F.R. 1466.3:

Beginning Farmer or Rancher - a person or legal entity who:

- Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch;
- In the case of a contract with an individual, or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located; and
- In the case of a contract with an entity or joint operation, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that each member provide some amount of the management or labor necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher -

- A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than \$155,200 in each of the previous 2 years (adjusted for inflation using Prices Paid by Farmer Index as compiled by National Agricultural Statistical Service); and
- Has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous 2 years (to be determined annually using Department of Commerce data).

C. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

Section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7, imposes a \$300,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between fiscal years 2008 and 2012. The limitation applies to CIG in the following manner:

- CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements. These grant agreements are not EQIP contracts; thus, CIG awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation.
- Direct or indirect payments made to an individual or entity using funds from a CIG award to carry out structural, vegetative, or management practices count toward each individual's or entity's EQIP payment limitation. Through project progress reports, CIG grantees are responsible for certifying that producers involved in CIG projects do not

exceed the payment limitation. Further, all direct and indirect payments made to producers using CIG funds must be reported to the NRCS CIG program manager in the semi-annual report. Direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which the producer has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds through any USDA programs (EQIP, Conservation Security Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, etc.) because that would be a duplicate payment.

D. Project Eligibility

To be eligible for CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements as set forth in [16 USC 3839aa-1](#). Further, all agricultural producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements. Additional information regarding EQIP eligibility requirements can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract.

A person or legal entity will not be eligible to receive any benefit during a crop, fiscal, or program year, as appropriate, if the average adjusted gross non-farm income of the person or legal entity exceeds \$1,000,000, unless not less than 66.66 percent of the average adjusted gross income of the person or legal entity is average adjusted gross farm income ([7 CFR Part 1400](#)).

A person who is determined ineligible for USDA program benefits under the Highly Erodible Land Compliance and Wetland Compliance provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 will not be eligible to receive direct or indirect payments through CIG.

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area through EQIP are ineligible for CIG funding except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation. The burden falls on the applicant to sufficiently describe the innovative features of the proposed technology or approach (applicants should reference the appropriate State's EQIP Eligible Practices List by contacting the NRCS State office).

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a Program Contact, Administrative Contact, and Technical Contact to provide oversight for each project receiving an award.

IV. APPLICATION and SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. PRE-PROPOSAL

1. How to Obtain Materials

The announcement for this CIG funding opportunity can be found on the following web site: www.grants.gov.

2. Content and Format

Applications must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration for the full proposal phase. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in their application. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate application for each project. Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered.

- a. Pre-proposal Cover Sheet: (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](#).
- b. Project Description: (limited to 3 pages in length) Applicants must submit a description including the information below.
 1. Project title
 2. Primary resource concern area for consideration
 3. Project duration (anticipated project start date of **September 1, 2012**)
 4. Project director name, and contact information (including e-mail)
 5. Names and affiliations of project collaborators
 6. Project purpose
 7. Project area/location
 8. Project summary
 9. Project deliverables/products
 10. Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement
 11. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher
- c. Project Location Map: Applicants must submit a map indicating the location of the proposed project (limited to 1 page in length).
- d. Budget Information (Standard Form 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs).
 1. Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the cost share. If your cost share is from multiple sources you may show that in the remaining columns of Item 6. Applicants must prepare this document to identify budget needs. The SF-424A is available at: [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](#)
 2. A one page narrative describing the budget needs and justifying why the budget is appropriate should also be included. This is limited to a 1-page maximum.
- e. DUNS Number: A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A *Federal Register* notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- f. Required Central Contractor Registry (CCR) Registration: The CCR is a database that serves as the primary government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the government. CIG applicants must register with the CCR. To register, go to: <https://www.bpn.gov/ccr/>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration

3. How to Submit an Application

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov. Alternatively, applications may be submitted in person or via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the addresses listed below. Applications submitted through Grants.gov must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, and instructions for adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date of **March 30, 2012**

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or web site problems related to Grants.gov. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems. All applicants who submit electronically are strongly encouraged to ALSO submit a paper copy through the methods listed below to ensure that any potential problems with the electronic submission system do not negatively impact any applications.

The address for submitting an application via hand-delivery, express mail or overnight courier service is:

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
Virginia State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

The contact phone number for hand-delivered pre-proposals is (804) 287-1691.

The address for submitting applications via the United States Postal Service is:

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
Virginia State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

Applications submitted by fax or email **will not** be considered.

4. Due Date

Pre-proposals must be received at the NRCS Virginia State Office by 4:00 p.m. EST on **March 30, 2012**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications by overnight mail, or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

5. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via e-mail. An applicant who does not receive such an e-mail acknowledgement within 30 days of their submission but believes he/she submitted a timely application must contact the NRCS program contact below. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered for the second phase of the application process.

CIG Program Contact:

Wade Biddix

Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209

Richmond, VA 23229-5014

Phone: (804) 287-1675

Fax: (804) 287-1737

Email: Wade.Biddix@va.usda.gov

6. Withdrawal

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are made.

Applications may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative.

7. Review

Applications will be evaluated by NRCS staff under the bulleted resource concern area identified by the applicant. Each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice, including EQIP payment limitations. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

8. Anticipated Notification

Applicants will be notified via mail by **April 20, 2012**. Applicants selected for full proposals will be required to submit a full proposal package by **June 1, 2012**.

V. INFORMATION FOR FULL PROPOSALS (only for those applicants notified at the end of the pre-proposal review process that their application has been identified for further evaluation).

A. FULL PROPOSAL

All Office of Management and Budget standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following web site: Grants.gov - Forms Repository. An application checklist is available in this announcement.

1. Content and Format

Applications are required to contain the content, format, and information set forth below in order to receive consideration for funding. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Applicants must submit one original copy of the application in the following format:

- Applications should be typewritten or printed on 8½" x 11" white paper. The text of the application should be in a font no smaller than 12-point, single-spaced, single-sided, with one-inch margins and page numbered.
- Applications that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding.

Applications must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

- a. Proposal Cover Sheet:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from Grants.gov - Forms Repository.
- b. Project Description:** The description must include the following information and is limited to 12 pages in length.
1. Project background: Describe the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a good probability for success of the project.
 2. Project objectives: Be specific using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the project's purpose and goals. Describe how the project is innovative.
 3. Project methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project.
 4. Location and size of project or project area: Describe the location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types and demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible.
 5. Producer participation: Estimate the number of producers involved in the project, and describe the extent of their involvement (all producers involved in the project must be eligible for EQIP).
 6. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. Anticipated project start date of **September 1, 2012**.
 7. Project management: Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant education or experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Explain the level of participation required in the project by government and non-government entities. Identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.
 8. Project deliverables/products: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that will allow NRCS to monitor project progress and payment.

In addition to specific deliverable, applications must include the following activities as deliverables:

- a. Semi-annual reports
 - b. Supplemental narratives to explain and support payment requests
 - c. Final report
 - d. Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress [A thorough list and explanation of measurable performance items specific to the project will be used in the technical evaluation (refer to "CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria")]
 - e. New technology and innovative approach fact sheet
 - f. Participation in at least one NRCS CIG Showcase or comparable NRCS event during the period of the grant
9. Benefits or results expected and transferability: Identify the results and benefits to be derived from the proposed project activities, and explain how the results will be measured. Identify project beneficiaries, i.e., agricultural producers by type, region, or sector; rural communities; and municipalities. Explain how these

entities will benefit. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities.

10. **Project evaluation:** Describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to evaluate the project, determine technical feasibility, and quantify the results of the project for the final report. Grant recipients will be required to provide a semi-annual progress report, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting quarterly reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.
- c. **Additional Information:** Bibliographies and/or resumes (not to exceed two pages per person), and references.
- d. **Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts: Describe and assess the** anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project. The description of the potential environmental and social impacts must address all potential beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. A full description and assessment of the potential impacts to all environmental resources must be disclosed. One line or short descriptions of environmental impacts are not acceptable. The length of the analysis should be commensurate with the complexity of the project proposed and the environmental resources impacted either directly, indirectly (later in time), or cumulatively. Where possible, information on environmental impacts should be quantified, such as number of acres of wetlands impacted, amount of carbon sequestration estimated, etc. Environmental resources include soil, water, air, plants, and animals, as well as other specific resources protected by law, Executive Order, and agency policy. These resources are outlined in the NRCS Environmental Evaluation Worksheet, form NRCS-CPA-52, which is available at: [NRCS-CPA-52](#). The NRCS-CPA-52 form can be used as a guide for the scope of environmental information that should be prepared for this section of the application. In addition to describing impacts, applicants are required to assess the significance or degree of potential environmental impact of the proposed project on environmental resources.
- e. **Budget Information:** The budget portion of the application consists of three parts described below.
 1. Standard Form (SF) 424A Budget Information- Non-Construction Programs: Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the cost share funds. If your cost share is from multiple sources you may show that in the remaining columns of Item 6. This form is the summary budget for the project.
 2. Detailed Budget Description: Specific item by item breakdown of the totals provided in Item 6 of the SF-424A should be provided. This detail should show what individual costs were added together to arrive at the totals presented in each of Object Class Categories on the SF-424. The format of this information should be readable in 8.5 by 11 printable pages. It may be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the evaluators and NRCS can readily understand what expenses will be incurred to support the project. The breakdown of the federal share and the cost share should be shown separately as in the SF-424A, not combined. This may be on separate documents or on different sections of the same presentation. Listed below are some suggested items that should be shown in the budget details. These are suggested details and are not inclusive:
 - 6a. Personnel; A list of personnel, their salary, hourly rate, hours, % time
 - 6b. Fringe Benefits: % of salary, differing rates for different staff

6c. Travel: basis for airfare, mileage rate (NTE Federal govt. rate), per diem, hotel, car rental, how many trips, how many days, number of staff
6d. Equipment: type of equipment, cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity

6e. Supplies: type of supplies, cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity (a general statement such as "office supplies \$3,000" is not acceptable)

6f. Contractual; Cost of each subcontract – the total of all subcontracts should be shown on the SF-424, but an itemized budget should be provided for each potential subcontract. The budgets for the subcontracts should follow this same format and be submitted with your proposal.

6g. Construction: N/A

6h. Other: Cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity

3. Budget Narrative: Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Explain how budget items are essential to achieving project objectives. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. In addition to the information above, the subcontractors and consultants must also submit a statement of work. The budget narrative should support the federal funds requested and the cost share.

f. Indirect Costs

If you have a current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement you must:

- a. Submit a copy of the agreement with your application,
- b. Calculate indirect costs based on the total Federal Funds awarded and cannot exceed 15 percent,
- c. Requesting unrecovered indirect costs in the matching funds is not approved.

If you do **not** have a current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement you **may not claim indirect costs** in this application.

- g. Matching:** Applications must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from non-federal third parties.

Cash Match

For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, (2) the name of the applicant organization, (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made, (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation, and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

In-Kind Match

"In-kind" refers to non-cash contributions of goods or services made by third party individuals or organizations to support projects. Examples of "in-kind" include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions must be necessary to accomplish program activities and are verifiable.

For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, (2) the name of the applicant's organization, (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made, (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution, and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

The sources and amounts of all matching support from outside the applicant institution must be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application immediately following the summary of matching support (matching support means a budget narrative broken down by year).

The value of applicant contributions to the project will be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars, Cost Principles that apply to their entity for additional guidance, and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

- h. Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement:** Identify any previously awarded CIG projects involvement related to this proposal and any of its principal investigators. Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award.
- i. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher:** If applicants wish to conduct a project on historically underserved farms, they must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities. This declaration is also required in order to be eligible for the in-kind contribution exception.
- j. Certifications:** Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. All applications must include this document. The SF-424B may be found at: Grants.gov - Forms Repository or by contacting the Virginia State office. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following from 7 CFR:
 - a. Part 3017, [Government wide Debarment and Suspension \(Non-procurement\)](#)
 - b. Part 3018, [New Restrictions on Lobbying](#)
 - c. Part 3021, [Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace \(Financial Assistance\)](#)
- k. DUNS Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. CIG applicants must obtain a DUNS Number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- l. Central Contractor Registry (CCR) Registration:** The CCR is a database that serves as the primary government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the government. This database is also used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the government. CIG applicants must register with the CCR. To register, go to: <https://www.bpn.gov/ccr/>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

2. How to Submit an Application

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov. Alternatively, applications may be submitted in person or via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the addresses listed below. Applications submitted through Grants.gov must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, and instructions for adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date of **June 1, 2012**.

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or web site problems related to Grants.gov. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems. All applicants who submit electronically are strongly encouraged to ALSO submit a paper copy through the methods listed below to ensure that any potential problems with the electronic submission system do not negatively impact any applications.

The address for submitting an application via hand-delivery, express mail or overnight courier service is:

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
Virginia State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

The contact phone number for hand-delivered applications is (804) 287-1691.

The address for applications sent via the United States Postal Service is:

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
Virginia State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

Note: Applicants must submit one signed original copy of each project application. Applicants must submit five copies of the application. Applications submitted by fax or email will not be considered.

3. Due Date

Applications must be received at the Virginia NRCS State Office by 4:00 p.m. EST on **June 1, 2012**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications by overnight mail, or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

4. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via e-mail. An applicant who does not receive such an e-mail acknowledgement within 30 days of their submission but

believes he/she submitted a timely application must contact the NRCS program contact below. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered for the second phase of the application process.

CIG Program Contact:

Wade Biddix
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1675
Fax: (804) 287-1737
Email: Wade.Biddix@va.usda.gov

5. Withdrawal

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are made. Applications may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative.

6. Funding Restrictions

Awardees may not use unrecovered indirect costs as part of their matching funds.

CIG funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing by the Authorized Departmental Officer in advance of incurring such costs:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and any amendments thereto;
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- f. Consulting services performed by a Federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee; and,
- g. Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces; and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

This list is not exhaustive. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact person.

7. Review

Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. Complete applications will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel based on the Criteria for Application Evaluation identified in the application instructions in section VI.A.

Applications with recommendations from the NRCS technical review group will be forwarded to the NRCS State Conservationist in Virginia who will make the final selections.

8. Patents and Inventions

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with USDA regulation 7 CFR §3019.36 and 7 CFR §3019.2. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal Government use, reserves the right to require the patentee to license others in certain circumstances, and requires that anyone exclusively licensed to sell the invention in the United States must normally manufacture it domestically.

9. Environmental Review Requirements

The Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations at 40 CFR parts 1500-1508 and the NRCS regulation that implements NEPA at 7 CFR part 650 require that an environmental review be prepared for actions where the agency has discretion and control. Accordingly, NRCS financial assistance under the CIG program requires compliance with these regulations. As part of the application packet, applicants are required to provide environmental information pertaining to their project to help NRCS determine the appropriate documentation required to comply with NEPA and NRCS regulations. If the application is selected for funding, the NRCS Program Contact will coordinate with the selected applicant concerning documentation for compliance with NEPA. The selected applicant will be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document (e.g., Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement if required for NEPA compliance). Grant funding cannot be approved until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

VI. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The proposals will be evaluated and reviewed by a NRCS technical and programs review group. The review group will make recommendations to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

A. Criteria for Application Evaluation

NRCS Staff will use the following criteria to evaluate project applications:

CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria
Purpose, Approach, and Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Design and implementation of project based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.b) Promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.c) Project outcome is clearly measurable.d) Potential for successful completion.e) Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered and an acceptably significant level of improvement will be achieved.

<p><u>Innovative Technology or Approach</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Project is innovative (national, regionally, and local in nature). b) Project conforms to description of innovative projects or activities in proposal request announcement.
<p><u>Project Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable. b) Project staff has technical expertise needed. c) Budget is adequately explained and justified. d) Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions and agencies.
<p><u>Transferability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Potential for producers and landowners to use the innovative technology or technologies. b) Potential to transfer the approach or technology statewide or to a broader audience or other geographic or socio-economic areas, including limited resource, socially disadvantaged and other traditionally underserved producers and communities. c) Potential for NRCS to successfully use the innovative approach or methods. d) Project will result in the development of technical or related technology transfer materials (technical standards, technical notes, guide sheets, handbooks, software, etc.)

B. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

CIG selections are anticipated to be announced by **August 1, 2012**; all agreements are expected to be awarded by **September 1, 2012**. Funds are not awarded, and work may not start until an agreement is signed by both NRCS and the grantee.

Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of **September 1, 2012**.

VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive a letter of official notification from the NRCS State Conservationist in Virginia. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the environmental review process and financial review. NRCS reserves the right to have grant award(s) administered by a third party. In the event that a third party administers the grant award(s), the applicant/recipient will be notified in writing.

B. Environmental Review Requirements

Upon notification of selection, the applicant must contact the NRCS program contact to determine the scope and level of NEPA documentation required for the project. The environmental documentation prepared to meet NEPA requirements must be prepared prior to award of grant funds.

Selected applicants may be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document(s) if an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is needed. Grant funds cannot be awarded until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

CIG Program Contacts:

Wade Biddix
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1675
Fax: (804) 287-1737
Email: Wade.Biddix@va.usda.gov

Patrick Vincent
Farm Bill Specialist
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1642
Fax: (804) 287-1736
Email: patrick.vincent@va.usda.gov

CIG Administrative Contact:

Denise Burruss, Contract Specialist
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1630
Fax: (804) 287-1734
Email: denise.burruss@va.usda.gov

Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions, is available on the CIG web page at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html>.

IX. OTHER INFORMATION

Important: Applications Missing Any of These Required Items Will Not Be Considered

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2012 PRE-PROPOSAL PACKAGE CHECK LIST

- ☐ **A. Pre-proposal Cover Sheet:** Submit Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance
- ☐ **B. Project Description:** Submit a description including the information below (Three (3) pages maximum in length).
 - 1. Project title
 - 2. Primary area for consideration (refer to page 4)
 - 3. Project duration
 - 4. Project director name, and contact information (including e-mail)
 - 5. Names and affiliations of project collaborators
 - 6. Project purpose
 - 7. Project area/location
 - 8. Project summary
 - 9. Project deliverables/products
 - 10. Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement
 - 11. Declaration of beginning or limited farmer or rancher
- ☐ **C. Budget Information:** Submit Standard Form 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs.
 - 1. Complete SF-424A
 - 2. One page narrative
- ☐ **D. DUNS Number:** For information about how to obtain a DUNS number, go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- ☐ **E. Required CCR Registration:** To register, visit <https://www.bpn.gov/ccr/>
- ☐ Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2012 FULL APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECK LIST

- ☐ **A. Proposal Cover Sheet:** Submit Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance
- ☐ **B. Project Description:** (12 pages maximum, single-spaced, single-sided, 12 point font)
 - 1. Project background
 - 2. Project objectives
 - 3. Project methods
 - 4. Location and size of project area (include a map if possible)
 - 5. Producer participation
 - 6. Project action plan and timeline
 - 7. Project management
 - 8. Project deliverables/products
 - 9. Benefits or results expected and transferability
 - 10. Project evaluation
- ☐ **C. Additional Information:** Bibliography, resumes, and/or references
- ☐ **D. Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts**
- ☐ **E. Budget Information:** Submit a completed Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs.
 - 1. Complete SF-424A
 - 2. Detailed budget description
 - 3. Budget narrative
- ☐ **F. Indirect Cost**
- ☐ **G. Matching Information**
- ☐ **H. Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement.**
- ☐ **I. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Farmer or Rancher:** If applicable, include a statement declaring your status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or community-based organization representing these entities.
- ☐ **J. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs.
- ☐ **K. DUNS Number:** For information about how to obtain a DUNS number, go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- ☐ **L. Central Contractor Registry (CCR):** To register, visit <https://www.bpn.gov/ccr/> Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).

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